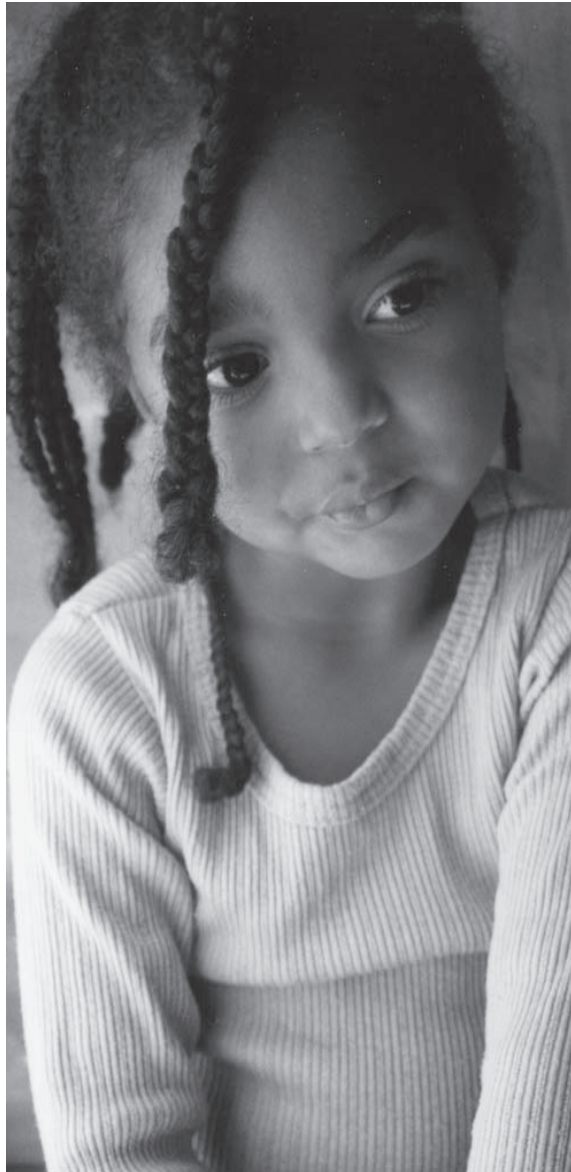

Interior Spaces



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**" The secret of education is respecting
the pupil."**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



Interior Spaces

Almost all of the regulations governing the design and construction of child care centers are **minimum** requirements determined to provide for the basic health, safety and well-being of children. While it is tempting to limit the design of your facility to these minimum standards, strive to provide the very best of what the children, families and staff of your program deserve within your budget and time constraints. Keep your vision at the forefront of your thinking.

Above all else, a quality program creates an environment that is nurturing to children. The program and quality of the spaces must also be supportive of the needs of adults so that their interactions and activities can be nurturing and productive with the children. A nurturing environment includes:

- Plenty of room to avoid crowding and competition for space
- Places for children to be alone, or with a small group of playmates
- Furnishings in good repair, arranged with a sense of beauty and order
- Comfortable places for adults to sit with

children and with each other

- Elements of the natural world-plants, wood, water, sunlight and fresh air
- Artifacts that reflect the culture, home life and family of the children and staff
- Opportunities for young bodies and minds to discover, explore, invent, and engage with their environment

Remembering the long hours that children will spend in this environment, plan all spaces to have a home-like (comfortable, familiar) rather than institutional (sterile, empty) feel. Give as much care and thought to each detail as you would in designing your own home. Each of the typical spaces is described below with considerations that will help make a facility work well for both children and adults. Remember, too, the value of flexibility and the art of compromise in your planning process; this will be particularly true if you are designing a small center. Some spaces can be used for different activities at different times of the day or week. Some spaces might be easily converted in the future for a different age group if your client base changes over time.

ENTRY

The entry is the first contact that families will have

with your facility everyday. While an entry area is not specifically required for licensing it can provide a warm and inviting place to start the day.

The entry should provide a place for at least a few people to sit and wait - to informally meet with a teacher, or to tour the facility with the director. Seating is also helpful when a parent is dropping off an upset child who needs comforting or for providing an opportunity for parents to socialize with each other. If possible, the entry should provide a small place for children to play and occupy themselves, with child-size furniture and play equipment, while a parent is talking to another adult. The design of the entry must also ensure that children cannot easily exit without supervision.

Typically you will want to include only one entry point for families and staff. Depending on your center's location and the population you serve, you may want to consider special security at the entry. This can be as simple as a locked door with a doorbell. The door lock will have to meet exiting requirements and the bell should ring at multiple locations within your facility to ensure that someone will hear it and be able to provide access to the facility.

More complex systems include key-card or key-pad systems - families receive cards or codes which

provide them access to the center without involving a staff person. These systems require periodic updating, as families leave and new families are served or as cards are lost.

All new buildings in Washington State must be barrier-free. If you are remodeling a facility you will be required to include some provisions to improve the accessibility of your facility, most importantly at your point of entry. Consult with your local building code official.

You may want to include a space at the entry for parents to check in with their children, or you may choose to do this within each classroom. This activity will require a counter, perhaps with a computer terminal, at a convenient height for writing when standing, while also being accessible to those in wheel chairs.

Use a bulletin board, at the entry or along a frequently used circulation path, to post messages and notices for parents to take home as well as postings required by licensing. This board can also display notices of upcoming community events, medical and health screenings, menus, activities at the local library or community center, and current activities of your program or other significant events in which the children have been involved.





You will want to provide some space close to the entry to store car seats for those children who may be dropped off by one parent and picked up by another. Somewhere in the center you will need to provide a place to store the personal items of parents and visitors to the center (coats, umbrellas, bags) – the entry is a logical place for this. You may also want to provide space in this area for the storage of strollers, if used by your program.

Hand washing is becoming better recognized and valued as a means of stopping the spread of infections. Some centers have begun requiring all who enter to wash their hands immediately. While this is not yet a part of the regulations in Washington State, it is worth considering the installation of multiple sinks (at heights appropriate to the intended users) in your entry. This can be artfully done and provide a beautiful focal point when entering the center.

ADULT SPACES

A child care center is primarily designed for the children it will serve, but the staff of the center will also need spaces which allow them to better perform their jobs. Calculations that determine licensed capacity do not include the spaces listed in this section, or the entry, above. However, all of the

functions listed below are required for the successful operation of a child care center or school age program. While all of these functions are important, they are not necessarily required to be in separate rooms. Certain compatible functions can happen in the same space at different times. Again, remain flexible and recognize that there are trade-offs and compromises that will affect the budget and operation of your program.

Director's Office

The director's office should be conveniently located near the entry with visual connection to the parking and drop-off areas, the entry door and the waiting area. This provides good visual control over who enters the property and the building and also provides family members easy access to the director. Ideally the director's office will also have a view to the outdoor play area.

The director's office should be large enough to accommodate a desk, computer terminal, file cabinets and enough chairs for a small meeting, either with families or staff. If the staff administers medicine, some of which require refrigeration, a small refrigerator can be located in the director's office for this purpose, rather than including these in a special container in the kitchen. This refrigerator can then

also hold the ice packs required for the daily bumps and falls that occur in a center.

Resource Area

A resource area or room provides a place for family members to access useful information. Ideally it should be located close to the entry and provide enough space for parents to spend time getting to know each other. Teachers should also have a space to access resources. The resources that teachers need may be more extensive than those required for families. A space that meets the needs of teachers might also be shared by families, but will probably include a computer terminal and work space, as well as furniture for small meetings.

Staff Lounge

A lounge for staff should be provided to ensure that staff has a private, out-of-the-way place to relax when on break. The room should be large enough to incorporate a couch and a small table and chairs. It can also be equipped with a small kitchenette – small refrigerator, sink, and microwave - for staff lunches. A telephone should be included in this space, both for private telephone calls a staff member might need to make during work breaks as well as for the ability to contact personnel in an emergency situation.

Adult Toilets

The Uniform Building Code (UBC) (Chapter 29), as amended by Washington State, requires adult toilets for the use of the child care center staff. Generally these are required to be sex specific, i.e. designated as Men or Women. However with very few staff, or staff of only one sex, often the building official can make a discretionary decision to reduce the number of required fixtures. New toilet rooms must be barrier-free as required by the UBC (Chapter 11). The toilet rooms should be located so that they are convenient to all staff from their classrooms and offices. At least one of the adult toilets should be located close to the entry for use by parents and other visitors to the center. All finishes are required to be impervious to moisture and should be planned for easy cleaning and maintenance.

Workroom

A staff workroom is essential. This is a combination space including storage, work space and equipment. It will, at a minimum, have a printer, fax machine, and copier and might also include paper cutters, light tables, and other equipment teachers might use to prepare materials for class. Lots of cabinets and shelving for storage should be provided, as well as a large flat surface for layout and work space.





Kitchen

The design of your kitchen will depend upon your food service plan - whether meals will be prepared on-site, brought in by a catering service and distributed on-site, or provided by families. Regardless, you will probably want to plan a kitchen and pantry space that can be flexible through time, as your food service plan might change. Whatever your type of food service for meals, snacks are generally prepared on site.

A small kitchen can function very efficiently if you have sufficient storage space available. A pantry or storage closet with adjustable shelving is more cost-effective than typical residential-type kitchen cabinetry, and better able to accommodate the large sizes of cooking utensils and food packaging you are likely to acquire. You may want to consider free-standing metal shelving in your kitchen for these same reasons.

Appliances may be residential grade. However, depending on the number of children you are serving, you may want to consider the financial trade-offs of purchasing commercial grade items that will last longer. You may also need to negotiate with your health specialist, who might require more extensive equipment if larger numbers of meals are prepared.

A separate hand washing sink will be required in addition to the sinks used for food preparation and dish washing. If there is no dishwasher, a three compartment sink with a disinfectant third step is required.

Commercial dishwashers cost substantially more than residential models, but complete a wash cycle in a fraction of the time it takes residential models and last longer. Dishwashers are required to either provide a sanitizing cycle at certain minimum temperatures or use an approved chemical sanitizer. Check with your health specialist for the exact temperature. A separate hot water tank, booster heater or mixing valve might be needed to provide the required temperature.

More than one refrigerator may be necessary to accommodate the quantity of fresh milk you are required to provide each day. Consider using space saving, long lasting commercial models. You will also need to carefully evaluate your needs for freezer space.

Generally, good quality residential ranges are adequate. You may need to negotiate with local authorities regarding the type of exhaust hood they will require.

If your kitchen is large enough it can also serve as an activity area for the children, if they are directly supervised and protected from sharp knives and hot stovetops. Even if the licensing team approves the use of the kitchen as an activity area for the children, its area is not included in the square footage calculations for enrollment capacity. The door to the kitchen must be lockable and children should be with appropriate staff while in the kitchen.

The location of the kitchen within your center is important because of the volumes of groceries and supplies that are brought in, as well as the amount of garbage generated which must be removed. Ideally the kitchen will be close to a door to the outside for easy delivery of supplies and removal of trash. Be sure that the kitchen is close to the spaces in which the children eat. Consider locating the kitchen in such a way as to allow the wonderful cooking smells to be appreciated by all who enter the facility - either close to the entry or an open activity area where children congregate.

CLASSROOMS

Where To Locate Classrooms

Classrooms for the different age groups need to be located based on a number of considerations: proximity

to the main entry to the center, mobility of the children, shared facilities between classrooms, and any direct connections desired between classrooms and other spaces, including the outdoors.

Infants, who are the least mobile and arrive with the greatest amount of paraphernalia, are ideally located in a classroom closest to the entry for the convenience of the parent. However, this location may also be the noisiest so you might choose to locate them away from the entry in quieter surroundings.

The mobility of the younger children may also influence the classroom locations. For example, because toddlers are not highly mobile, it may make sense to locate their classroom with direct access to the outdoor play area which they will be using many times during the day. Infants and toddlers through 18 months of age should have classrooms located at adjacent exterior grade, or have ramps to grade, to allow safe evacuation during an emergency. It is important that the special needs of each age group, and even the needs of the younger versus the older children within each age group, are carefully considered and recognized as distinct from each other.





Children's toilet rooms are often located between similarly aged children's classrooms to economize on the expense of routing plumbing lines and installing toilets and sinks. These, or other potentially shared spaces like storage closets, will determine the adjacency of classrooms.

Some centers emphasize direct transitions for children as they get older and move into the next classroom. This can be handled nicely by providing a door with full height safety glass between the two classrooms, allowing children to first look into the classroom that they will be moving into, and then to pass through the door, spending a little more time each day in the adjacent classroom.

All classrooms for children up to the age of five should have direct access to outdoor fenced play areas. Indirect access (short distances through unfenced areas) may be acceptable to your licensor for the older children of this group. Once outside, easy access for the children to a bathroom from the play area is very helpful for the teachers who are watching over many children at the same time.

Activity Areas

All classrooms need to accommodate a wide variety of activities, some of which will be active and/or

noisy, some passive and/or quiet, some neat and some messy. Take the time, early in the development of the floor plan, to thoughtfully lay out the activity areas in each classroom to ensure that you will have classrooms configured effectively and with sufficient flexibility. You may also want to plan for future flexibility in your classrooms, should the quantities of the various ages of children served change.

Use moveable furniture to create several interest areas so that a variety of activities can occur simultaneously without interfering with each other. Ambulatory infants must be kept separate from non-ambulatory infants. Older children will appreciate furniture and materials that allow them to modify and create their own spaces - such as work areas, forts and clubhouses. Layout of activity areas should allow circulation to pass by, rather than through them. It's a good idea to locate the messy activities (eating, arts and crafts) near a sink on an impervious and washable floor. If possible, provide a place for long term projects to remain in place so that children, especially the older children, can return to and continue their project's development over time.

Consider the amount of room you will need based on the number of children you hope to care for, and strive to provide enough space to avoid crowding

and activities interfering with each other. Licensing dictates age-specific **minimum** square footage requirements per child within the children's activity areas, both interior and exterior. If at all possible, plan for more space. Licensing requirements also define age-specific maximum group sizes and limit classrooms to a maximum of two groups.

There are many texts and resources available that address how to create good activity areas. See the Appendix for a listing. The different general types of activity areas are described below. Remember that it is important to include age appropriate tools and equipment for the ages you are serving to provide for each child's mental, physical, and social development. All activity areas should be clearly defined, should have appropriate surfaces for the specific activities, and should have child-accessible storage for the materials related to those specific activities.

Active Play Areas

These types of activity areas serve dramatic play activities such as housekeeping and dress-up, large block building, and music and movement activities. These activities are generally located next to the more heavily trafficked areas of the classroom, reserving

the more protected areas for quiet activities. The exception is block building areas that should be somewhat protected to ensure that children's creations will not be easily or accidentally demolished. Carpeting is appropriate for most active play areas.

Quiet/Passive Areas

Activities in these areas include things like reading, listening to stories or soft music, writing, small block building, and manipulatives. Locate these activity areas in the most protected corners of the classroom, away from the heavy circulation paths. Carpet or area rugs are a necessity in quiet or passive activity areas.

Messy Areas

Messy activities include painting, water play, clay work, science and nature learning, cooking and eating. Good lighting, including natural light, moisture resistant flooring and durable and easily cleanable furniture are essential at these areas. It's best to locate these activities close to sinks for easy clean up.



Napping may take place anywhere within the general activity areas of the classroom with children on individual cots, mats or cribs. If the sleeping area is separated in some way, methods must be devised so that the children continue to be in constant auditory and visual range of the staff. Plexiglass or safety glass can be used in partitions. It is important to be able to dim the lights or use shades on windows to provide low levels of light appropriate for napping.

Furniture should be appropriately sized for the children in each age group and should include some comfortable furniture like soft chairs, cushions or a small sofa and area rugs. Artwork hung on the walls can also help to create a comfortable, “homey” feel. Furniture, games and equipment should be free of splinters, rough and/or sharp edges, and rust.

Ideally your facility will be specifically dedicated to the child care or school-age care program; if you must share the facility with other uses on a regular basis, see the suggestions under “Special Considerations”.

Spatial Variety

Spatially rich environments provide a variety of experiences for children that foster their cognitive,

emotional and social development. Carefully designing the size, configuration, color, natural and artificial lighting and furnishings of each space will provide opportunities for discovery and learning in a stimulating and comfortable environment. Separate areas within the center can be designed to create special places for different activities such as quiet, dimly lit places for napping, cozy spaces for reading time, open areas for active play and light filled rooms for art activities. These spaces can be created as part of the building design or can be created with moveable or permanent built-in furnishings, play equipment or other elements.

Consider providing some special places of smaller scale just for children that are visible to the teachers but that only children can access easily – for example, a tiny alcove with a table and two toddler chairs. These kinds of spaces provide fun and unique places for children to be, and provide a private place for a child to experience emotions, or get away from the bustling activity of the classroom if needed.

Lofts are a good way to create a variety of interesting places for children and to create additional activity areas. The area on top of the loft provides a great place for children to take a break from the classroom’s bustle of activity, to read quietly and look at the classroom from a different perspective.



Steve Keating

The space under the loft can become a cozy spot for reading, a small-scale home for dramatic play, or even storage for sleeping cots. The area on top of the loft is not, however, included in the square footage calculation for determining licensing capacity.

The upper level of the loft will require a railing to protect children from falling, but must also allow for supervision. Frequently plexiglass is used to act as a transparent guardrail. Lofts are typically considered furniture or play equipment by building departments, and thus not subject to the building code requirements for stairs and handrails. However, they are subject to the ASTM regulations for playground equipment and will be inspected by DCCEL licensors and health specialists for compliance. Many children's furniture catalogs offer lofts, or a group of skilled parents can volunteer to build a loft.

Another device frequently used to create spatial variety is a raised platform. Platforms create a separate and special area, provide an opportunity to enhance climbing and jumping skills, create a way to view the room from a different vantage point, allow children to look out higher windows and provide the potential for storage underneath. Platforms are often also treated as furniture by building departments.

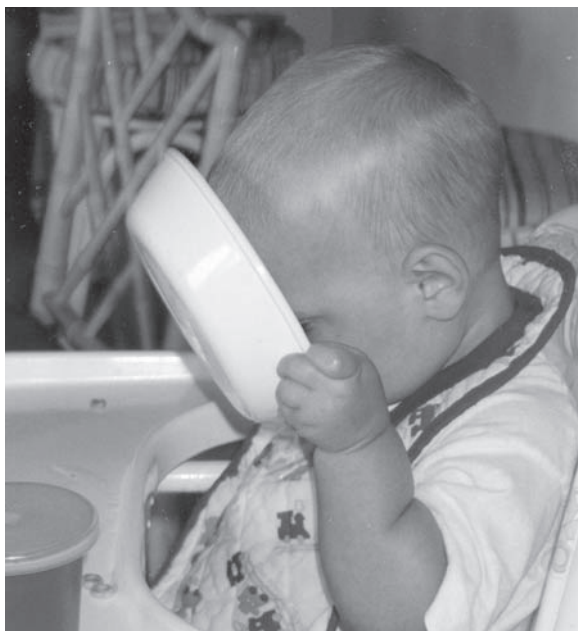
Changing the ceiling height, or shape, is yet another way to create spatial variety, and is sometimes easier than changes in the floor level. Variation in the ceiling plane can be part of the center's building structure, or it can be applied to an existing ceiling surface, like a blanket hung to create a soft, cozy space.

Natural and artificial lighting can be manipulated to create spatial variety. Skylights, or other concentrations of natural light, can be useful in creating open, expansive areas within a classroom. Incandescent floor lamps, table lamps or wall-mounted fixtures can provide a warm, cozy mood in special locations. Dimmer switches help to control the quantity of light produced for special effects. Light tables and overhead projectors that project colors and images on adjacent walls can also add another interesting dimension to the quality of light in a space. The Washington State Energy Code provides maximum lighting wattage allowances for ambient lighting in child care centers and school age programs that generally dictate the use of fluorescent lighting. However, specific task lighting is not regulated in this way.

Natural Light and Fresh Air

All spaces where children spend time within the center should have abundant natural light. At least





some of the windows and/or skylights should be operable to provide fresh air and ventilation. Windows should be located so that children are not able to open or climb out of them. At least some windows should be located to provide children views of the world outside of the classroom. It's also a nice idea to locate some of the windows at a height and size that clearly says "children only."

Classroom doors to outdoor play areas and hallways should have safety glass in them, both to increase the amount of natural light that comes into the classroom and also to provide visibility from one space into another.

Relites (interior windows) from hallways into classrooms and between classrooms allow children to see different activities in other classrooms, as well as their friends and siblings, and allow parents and visitors to watch without disrupting classroom activities. The increase in visual connections fosters a greater sense of community throughout the center and allows natural light from the exterior windows of the classroom to pass through to spaces that may not have exterior windows.

Food Preparation Facilities

Care givers of infants and young toddlers need a place to prepare bottles and snacks without having

to leave the classroom. A food preparation area consists of a sink, a small refrigerator and a counter and should be sufficiently far away from the diaper changing area to prevent contamination from airborne particulates, approximately eight feet. If space doesn't allow for the required distance, a transparent vertical barrier may be used to achieve this separation while maintaining visual connections. Consult with your DCCEL licenser and health specialist for specific requirements. Microwaves are not allowed for heating infant bottles or foods; crock pots are recommended for this purpose. Some storage will be needed for food items brought from home and kitchen utensils.

A dishwasher in this area is very helpful as it can sanitize both the bottles and utensils used in feeding the children, as well as their toys.

Food preparation facilities are not necessary in classrooms for older toddlers, preschoolers and school age children, although a small kitchenette is a wonderful program addition for these age groups for cooking projects that can tie in with other curriculum.

Diapering / Toileting Facilities

Depending on the children's ages in each classroom, you will need to provide a diaper

changing area and/or toilets. Be sure to refer to the *Minimum Licensing Requirements* and consult with the DCCEL licensor and health specialist for specific requirements and guidelines.

Diaper changing facilities must meet many requirements. In order to maintain continuous visual and auditory supervision of the children not being changed, it is helpful to locate the surface on which the child is laid, whether it is a counter or table, perpendicular to an adjacent wall (a peninsula) or as an island. This allows teachers to face into the classroom while changing diapers. Changing surfaces located facing a wall are discouraged. Diaper changing pads must have a fall prevention barrier around the perimeter, extending four inches higher than the top of the pad. A hand washing sink is required, preferably adjacent to the diaper changing surface within an arm's reach. Be sure to provide adequate storage for clean diapers, cleaning supplies, wipes, lotions and disposal.

Toilet facilities for children must have moisture-impervious surfacing on the floor and walls for ease of cleaning and sanitizing. A floor drain is recommended. Some plumbing fixture manufacturers offer child-sized toilets which have seats approximately eleven inches above the floor – these are recommended for toddlers. For the older children, typical residential toilets with seats

approximately fourteen inches above the floor are preferred.

Toilets for children ages 29 months or younger must be located so that the children are in continuous auditory and visual range of adults. Licensing regulations require you to provide visual privacy for those preschoolers showing a need for privacy from other children. Some child care center operators recommend that children be provided with privacy regardless, especially after age three. For school age children, separate toilet rooms for boys and girls are required by licensing.

Toilet rooms can be located and shared between classrooms. The required ratio of toilets per number of children cannot be reduced in this way, but the arrangement can reduce the expense of constructing toilet facilities dedicated to each classroom. Sharing facilities in this manner creates a passage between the two classrooms, enabling quick contact and back-up assistance for the teachers in these classrooms, but also requires more supervision of children who may want to wander.

After toileting all children must wash their hands. The hand washing sink adjacent to the diaper changing surface serves children in diapers, with the assistance of teachers. For toilet rooms, sinks





at child-height must be provided in quantities specified by *Minimum Licensing Requirements*. Hand washing sinks may be located in the same room as the toilets, or outside, but immediately adjacent to the toilet room. Sinks used for hand washing after toileting can serve double-duty as arts and crafts sinks if the sink and counter are washed, rinsed, sprayed with bleach water and let air dry before using (arts and crafts sinks are not required, but are recommended in all classrooms except those for infants.) Faucets should be located within reach of the children. Avoid the use of spouts that swivel, or you will have counters flooded with water.

Licensing requirements also limit maximum water temperatures at all fixtures accessible to children.

Teacher Work Space

Teachers need approximately 3 – 5 lineal feet of work surface, preferably at counter height (36 inches above the floor), which is generally out of young children's reach. This can be where the classroom telephone is located and adjacent to where files and paperwork are stored. Teachers can use this space to access and update records on each child, take notes during telephone conversations, and prepare curriculum materials.

Storage

It is often said that you can never have too much storage space in child care centers. Storage devices such as built-in cabinets, shelving, and closets are absolutely necessary, but will increase initial build-out costs. Careful management of materials and supplies, by recycling or giving away un-used items, will help immensely to keep storage needs limited. You can provide some storage for children's materials with moveable furniture, such as low shelves or cupboards, which can double as separations between activity areas. When storage devices are not used as moveable space dividers, they should be securely attached to an adjacent wall or the floor.

You should provide shelves, baskets and cupboards accessible to the children for items they will use frequently, a closet or large shelves for bulk items that are used less frequently, and someplace for both children and staff to store personal belongings. Remember to plan for suitable storage, preferably within the classroom, for cots or mats used for napping.

Storage for children includes:

- shelving, cabinets, baskets and bins for storing games and materials that the children can access – the heights of these

should vary with the age of the children served

- cubbies, baskets or bins for the children to have their own place to store their personal items. Consider the needs of the different age groups you are serving – infants will need enough space to include a change of clothing, extra diapers and special foods; toddlers and preschoolers may bring art work, or toys and blankets from home; school age children will have book bags and/or gym bags.
- cubbies, hooks or small lockers for each child's outdoor clothes, including coats, sweaters and rain boots/rubbers/galoshes.

Storage for teachers includes:

- cabinets for personal items, such as coats and purses.
- high shelving or cabinets for materials and tools that should not be accessible to children

Acoustical Treatment

Acoustical treatment should be seriously considered in all children's activity areas, as too much noise in a classroom degrades the learning experience and is stressful for all. Even with

reasonable numbers of children in separate classrooms, noise can still be a big issue. Carpeting on the floors can help to absorb sound, as can area rugs, sound absorbent materials (like quilts or other fabrics) hung on walls, fire retardant banners draped from the ceiling, and acoustical ceiling tile.

SPECIAL SPACES FOR CHILDREN

Active Indoor Space

In regions where weather can be inclement for long periods of time, it is very helpful to have an indoor space for active play and movement. Provide approximately 75 square feet per child using the active indoor space at any one time. This space can also be used as a gathering space for the entire center for special presentations or events, or as a space in which to conduct parent education classes. Try to locate a storage area adjacent to this space so that a variety of items used for children's activities and for adult events can be conveniently stored when not in use.

Special Project Area

A separate, protected area for special childrens'



Reggio Children



projects in-the-works is a wonderful addition to any child care center or school age program. This space doesn't have to be large since it will primarily accommodate small groups of children at any given time. It should have large, flat, low work surfaces around which several children can gather and should be full of a wide variety of materials, in bins and on shelves, which might get incorporated into the project. By closing this space off so that projects can be left for an indefinite period of time, projects can develop over time because they don't need to be put away every day. Children can revisit the on-going project daily and incorporate concepts from other classroom projects, making this a particularly special place.

Kitchen

Access to the center's kitchen for cooking projects, particularly for the older children, is an important way to help make centers less institutional. However, when children of any age are present in the kitchen they must be supervised directly and protected from items that may harm them, like sharp knives or hot stove tops.

If the kitchen itself is not large enough to accommodate a group of children safely, a low, open counter along one side of the kitchen could be a

solution. This allows children to participate in kitchen activities but remain safely outside. The height of this counter should be appropriate to the age of the children involved.

Circulation

A certain percentage of your square footage will inevitably be consumed by hallways. Use them well. Provide relites (interior windows) into classrooms to share natural light as well as enliven the hall with scenes of the children within. Children's art work and photos of their activities can be displayed along the walls as in a gallery. Small spaces along the hall can be carved out for special functions – a computer terminal, a telephone area for parents, a window seat, or an area for plants or an aquarium. If the hall is wide enough it can be used as an active area during inclement weather.

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Drinking Fountains

The Uniform Building Code (Chapter 29), as amended by Washington State, requires drinking fountains in child care centers, depending upon the number of occupants. Drinking fountains are required

to be barrier-free (UBC Chapter 11 and ADAG's for children). Locate drinking fountain(s) so that they are convenient to staff and visitors, but do not present an inappropriate distraction for the children.

DCCEL requires that child care operators "shall provide the child disposable single-use cups, individual drinking cups or glasses, or inclined jet-type drinking fountains." The *Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers* also defines types of drinking fountains that are not allowed.

Laundry

Licensed centers are required to maintain access to laundry facilities, capable of adequately sanitizing contaminated laundry, either on premises or off-site. Most centers prefer washers and dryers on site. A single pair is usually sufficient, depending upon their capacity. The appliances may be located side-by-side with a folding counter on top and shelves above, or if space is tight, use stacked units. Consider also using energy efficient appliances. The laundry should have washable, moisture impervious flooring, good lighting and if possible, a floor drain.

The laundry can be combined in a space that houses other similar functions, e.g. hot water heater, mop

sink, furnace, electrical panels, or telephone service boards. It must, however, be ventilated, be separate from the kitchen and have a lockable door so that it can stay inaccessible to children.

Janitor Equipment

Licensed centers are required to have mop sinks, and to provide mechanical ventilation to the mop storage area. This does not have to be a separate room and can easily be located with the laundry or mechanical equipment.

Communications Systems

Telephone

There should be telephones in all rooms in the center that are occupied by children, for use in an emergency. While outside or on a field trip, cell phones are also helpful in an emergency. Telephones should also be located in places convenient for staff use. Consider additional telephone outlets at locations where computers might be located.

Computers

Computers should be located in the director's office and staff workroom and/or resource center. These



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will require dedicated circuits or special wiring. In addition to those in adult work areas, you may want to consider installing dedicated circuits or special wiring for computers in the classrooms.

Electrical Systems

Fire Alarm System

Fire alarm systems are required in all child care centers and school age programs. Verify the specific requirements, based upon number of occupants and location within the building, with the State Fire Marshal.

Artificial Lighting

All light bulbs and tubes in child-accessible areas, food preparation areas, and linen storage areas must be shielded in the event of breakage. This can be accomplished by installing coated safety bulbs or clear sleeves on fluorescent tubes if the fixture itself does not provide sufficient shielding.

The Washington State Energy Code (WSEC) prescribes maximum wattages per square foot for lighting power consumption in all child care centers and school age facilities. The WSEC also requires that all educational facilities have independent

switching that allows lights close to windows to be switched off when there is adequate natural light.

Classrooms also have to provide low light levels when children are napping. This can be accomplished with dimmer switches, low wattage task lighting and adjustable blinds on the windows.

Power Distribution

All child accessible electrical outlets, including those in the kitchen if used as an activity area, are required to be equipped with non-removable safety devices or covers. Check with your DSHS / DCCEL licensor and health specialist as well as the local building department official for an interpretation of which outlets are considered accessible. Also check with DCCEL for a list of which tamper-proof or safety outlets are approved for use in child care centers.

There are generally no special requirements for electrical outlets in school age only facilities.

Be sure to coordinate the requirements for tamper-proof outlets with outlets required to be GFI type (ground fault interrupter). GFI type outlets are required when an outlet is within a certain distance of a water source. Acceptable tamper-proof GFI outlets are not manufactured. If all electrical outlets

within a children's activity area are considered accessible to children (even those mounted at 42" above finished floor above a counter) then GFI circuits may need to be used.

Provide enough power outlets to allow for flexible use of spaces without the need for long cords. Extension cords and multi-plug adapters are not allowed in child care centers and school age programs. Consider locating outlets in the floor to allow for such things as the use of a cassette deck or cd player, overhead projector or computer in the middle of a room.

Electrical panels can be quite large and space needs to be planned for them – seriously consider an electrical closet or room. Specific relationships between panels and electrical meters are dictated by the Uniform Electrical Code, as are clearances for access. The panels should be accessible to all staff in case of emergencies, and inaccessible to children at all times.

Mechanical Systems

Fire Suppression

Sprinkler systems are required in a number of different circumstances, for example when children

in centers are located above the first story. Verify the requirements with both the State Fire Marshal and the local building department.

Heating, Cooling and Ventilation

All child care centers and school age programs require space heating equipment. Depending upon weather conditions in the area, cooling equipment may also be desirable. Space needs to be allocated for this equipment – on a roof top, in an attic, in a furnace room, in a crawl space or in a basement. The location should provide easy access for maintenance and repair, but the equipment should be inaccessible to the children at all times. Radiators, baseboard units, vents and other heat delivery devices should be sufficiently protected or located so that children are not exposed to surfaces that are hot to the touch, or hot air blowing into their faces. Portable space heaters are not allowed.

While fresh air through open windows is desirable, there may be some situations in which mechanical ventilation provides fresh air for the entire center. Air handling equipment provides the opportunity to improve the quality of the indoor air through filtration, but can also easily spread germs between classrooms. Mechanical ventilation is required for laundry rooms, mop storage areas, and diapering

and toilet spaces. Ventilation requirements are governed by the Uniform Mechanical Code.

Water Heaters

Because of the different water temperature levels required in a child care center, you may want to consider installing multiple hot water heaters: one set to the recommended temperature for fixtures accessible to children, and another providing the higher sanitizing temperature required for laundry and dishwashing. Other options include using mixing valves at appropriate locations, installing booster heaters, purchasing appliances with internal heaters or using lower temperature chemical sanitizing systems for laundry and dish washing.

games, and equipment that are used regularly but rotated from week to week. Larger quantities of these things and toys out of rotation should be stored elsewhere in the center, accessible to all teachers. Classrooms with children who nap also need a place to store napping equipment when not in use.

All cabinet hardware shall ensure that pinching hazards are eliminated. Scissor hinges are prohibited. Finger guards may be installed at door hinges.

Common storage must be planned for paper products (paper towels, toilet paper, art supplies, office supplies), clean diapers if a diaper service is used, food stuffs (a pantry adjacent to the kitchen is ideal), cleaning products (inaccessible to the children), seasonal items (holiday decorations, wading pools), large motor equipment that might be shared by several classrooms and adult sized tables and chairs if functions for parents are planned.

Storage

Planning adequate storage for your facility is a challenge. Storage is absolutely necessary, but the desire is always to devote more space to the children. Be realistic in your planning – if you don't provide appropriate places for storage, it will end up in inappropriate ones.

Each classroom should have some storage areas for items that are used daily (art supplies, toilet paper) and renewed when needed, and for toys,

